

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 59  
By Sands

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of former Tennessee  
Attorney General and Reporter William M.  
Leech, Jr.

WHEREAS, it was with deep regret that we learned of the death on June 11, 1996 of one of Tennessee's most distinguished citizens, former Attorney General and Reporter William M. Leech, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, General Leech, the son of Chancellor and Mrs. William M. Leech, was born November 1935, in Charlotte, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, he received his Bachelor of Science degree from Tennessee Technological University in 1958 and while at Tech he was a highly regarded student and valued member of the football team; and

WHEREAS, General Leech was a successful teacher and high school coach for four years before serving two years in the United States Army, in Germany during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, he received his Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Tennessee in 1966 and established what was to become a very successful practice in Columbia. He served admirably as Assistant District Attorney for the 11th Judicial Circuit of Tennessee from 1967 to 1970, as Columbia Municipal Judge from 1970 to 1974, as President of the Maury County Bar Association in 1974 and as president of the Maury County Chamber of Commerce; and

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WHEREAS, General Leech was elected a Delegate and then President of the 1971 State Constitutional Convention which made several important suggested revisions to the Tennessee Constitution regarding property taxation for farm, residential, commercial and utility property; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, he was selected to head the Democratic effort to reelect the party's five candidates for the Tennessee Supreme Court, an effort that proved successful; and

WHEREAS, General Leech next served as a Delegate and Chairman of the Judicial Articles Committee in the 1977 Constitutional Convention, a convention that with his diligent leadership recommended important, reforms in the state judicial system; and

WHEREAS, because of his widely acknowledged legal abilities, the Tennessee Supreme Court appointed him attorney general in 1978; and

WHEREAS, General Leech served as a bridge between the traditional and modern State Attorney General's office. General Leech took office when the Attorney General primarily represented state officials and institutions, but, at the time of his resignation the office had been transformed into an aggressive advocate for all citizens of the state; and

WHEREAS, one of General Leech's proudest achievements was his creation of the Environmental Enforcement Division in 1983; and

WHEREAS, during his term, General Leech also created the Antitrust and Consumer Protection Division, a momentous event for consumer protection enforcement; and

WHEREAS, General Leech provided wise counsel to the leadership of this body during a trying time in this state's history; and

WHEREAS, General Leech returned to the private practice of law in 1984 and at the time of his death, he was a senior partner in the Nashville and Columbia law firm of Waller Lansden Dortch and Davis, where he represented persons from all stations in life, without regard to the popularity of their cause, treating everyone he encountered with dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, the lengthy list of groups General Leech served is very impressive and includes the Tennessee Young Lawyers Conference Foundation, as a Fellow and President; the Appellate Court Nominating Commission, as a member; the American Judicature Society, as a member of its Executive Committee; the Southern Attorneys General Conference, as President; the Indigent Defense Commission, as a chairman; the Tennessee Post-Conviction Defense Commission, as Chairman; the Tennessee Performing Arts Center, as a member of its Board of Directors, and the Capital Case Resource Center, as a member of its Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, he was also an active member of the Society of Attorneys General Emeritus, the National Association of Attorneys General, the American Bar Association, the Tennessee Bar Association, the Nashville Bar Association, the United Givers Fund, the American College of Trial Lawyers, the Association of Bank and Commercial Law Firms, the Freedom Forum, the Emergency Committee for Habeus Corpus, the Harry Phillips American Inn of Court, and the 7th Tennessee Cavalry, Company D, reenactors; and

WHEREAS, General Leech was an active member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Donna Babb Leech of Sante Fe; two daughters, Mrs. John (Rebecca) Whittemore of Nashville and Mrs. Patrick (Katie) Parker of Jackson; one son, William M. Leech III of Franklin and one grandson, Henry Lee Whittemore of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, Governor Don Sundquist praised him by stating: "Tennesseans have lost a great public servant, General Leech was a wise counselor, a courageous fighter for the rights of the individual and a stalwart champion of the rule of law."; and

WHEREAS, former Governor Ned R. McWherter said of him: "I remember Bill Leech as one of my best friends and advisors. When I made the decision to run for governor, he was one of the first people I went to for advice."; and

WHEREAS, Supreme Court Justice Frank Drowota commented that: "During his six years as attorney general, he was a mentor and role model for many of the outstanding attorneys and judges in this state. He was an extraordinary man."; and

WHEREAS, his close friend, attorney Thomas H. Peebles, III said: "Bill Leech was a very fine lawyer, but he was much more than that. He was a real man, a gentleman, a man who always had the courage to stand up for what he believed in."; and

WHEREAS, his close friend and law partner Charles A. Trost said: "Bill Leech loved his family, his country and the law...he was a true friend, wise counselor and impassioned champion of fairness and justice under the law."; and

WHEREAS, General Leech brought dignity, integrity, courage, compassion and honor to the practice of law as a public servant; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we pause in our deliberations to remember and reflect on the numerous contributions Bill Leech made to this state; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of former Attorney General and Reporter William M. Leech, Jr. and extend our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.